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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001679

SIPDIS

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PLEASE PASS TO OSD/POLICY, JOINT STAFF/YIKE, EUCOM/RIZZO,
CENTCOM, NSC/VOLKER

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SUBJECT: TFIZ01: ITALIANS DISCUSS BRIGADE AND CARABINIERI
FOR IRAQ

REF: A. STATE 98807

[1](#)B. ROME 1660

CLASSIFIED BY: ACTING/DEPUTYCHIEF OF MISSION THOMAS COUNTRYMAN FOR REA
SONS .5(B)(D)

[1](#)1. (C) THE ITALIAN LNO AT TAMPA, GENERAL SANTINI, IS EXPECTED TO PRESENT THE ITALIAN MILITARY'S PROPOSAL -- TO CONTRIBUTE A BRIGADE AS WELL AS CARABINIERI UNITS FOR IRAQ OPERATIONS -- TO CENTCOM AS EARLY AS APRIL 18, ONCE THE PLAN HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE CHOD. BASED ON OUR APRIL 17 MEETING WITH THE UK EMBASSY'S DCM, SCOTT WIGHTMAN, POL-MIL OFFICER NICK HOPTON, AND RAF REPRESENTATIVE CHRIS PURKISS, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE ITALIANS AND BRITISH HAVE HAD HIGH-LEVEL MIL-TO-MIL DISCUSSIONS ON THE PROPOSAL, MOST RECENTLY IN LONDON ON APRIL 15. WIGHTMAN SAID THE ITALIANS HAVE OFFERED -- SUBJECT TO GOI POLITICAL APPROVAL -- A BRIGADE THAT CAN DEPLOY WITHIN ONE MONTH TO OPERATE WEST OR NORTH OF BASRA IN THE BRITISH ZONE. OF THAT A UNIT OF 800 BERSAGLIERE SOLDIERS CAN DEPLOY WITHIN 48 HOURS. THE ITALIAN PROPOSAL ALSO INCLUDES THE GARIBOLDI HEADQUARTERS UNIT, AND 400-500 CARABINIERI PREPARED TO SERVE AS MSUS IN THE BAGHDAD REA. A TEAM OF BRITISH MILITARY PLANNERS WILL BE IN ROME ON APRIL 23 TO WORK OUT ADDITIONAL DETAILS WITH THE ITALIANS. THE BRITISH AND THE ITALIANS WANT TO BE SURE THAT THE PROPOSAL FITS WITH CENTCOM PLANNING.

[1](#)2. (C) AFTER CONSULTING WITH LONDON LATER ON APRIL 17, HOPTON SAID THAT HIS AMBASSADOR PLANNED TO ENCOURAGE PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI TO APPROVE A RAPID DEPLOYMENT OF THE BRIGADE AND CARABINIERI TO THE BRITISH ZONE WHEN THEY MET AT AN EVENT THAT EVENING. HIS GOVERNMENT WAS CONFIDENT THAT THIS WOULD RESULT IN THE POLITICAL APPROVAL THE ITALIAN MILITARY HAS BEEN SEEKING, PARTICULARLY SINCE PM BLAIR AND BERLUSCONI HAD DISCUSSED THE IRAQ SITUATION (AND ESDP) IN ATHENS ON APRIL 16, HOPTON EXPLAINED. (NOTE: THE BRITISH EMBASSY IS CLOSED ON APRIL 18 AND WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO REACH WIGHTMAN OR HOPTON FOR A READ-OUT ON THE AMBASSADOR'S EXCHANGE WITH THE PM. WE ARE FOLLOWING UP.)

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT. THE MOD AND THE GOI'S INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE HAVE PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED A PREFERENCE TO HAVE ITALY'S NATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS CO-LOCATED. OUR DISCUSSIONS TO DATE INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT THE DEFENSE STAFF PROPOSES TO PUT A BRIGADE IN THE BRITISH ZONE AND CARABINIERI IN THE BAGHDAD AREA, WHILE THE TASK FORCE IS OFFERING A RED CROSS FIELD HOSPITAL AND OTHER EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR BAGHDAD, TO BE PROTECTED BY ITALIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL. THE ITALIANS (AND WE) HAVE BEEN SEEKING GUIDANCE ON WHERE CENTCOM WANTS TO LOCATE THE BRIGADE, THE CARB UNITS AND THE FIELD HOSPITAL SO THEY CAN TAILOR THEIR PROPOSAL ACCORDINGLY. OUR BRITISH COLLEAGUES PREDICT THAT, DURING THE MILITARY PLANNING MEETING ON APRIL 23, THE GOI WILL ADJUST ITS PACKAGE SO THAT THE BRIGADE AND THE CARABINIERI UNITS BOTH OPERATE IN THE BRITISH ZONE, ASSUMING THAT FITS WITH CENTCOM'S PLAN. WE NOTE INFORMAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS THAT FIELD HOSPITALS ARE ESPECIALLY NEEDED IN AREAS OTHER THAN BAGHDAD, AND ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE ITALIANS MAY BE WILLING TO LOCATE THEIR HOSPITAL (REFEL B) IN THE BRITISH ZONE IN ORDER TO CONSOLIDATE ITALY'S NATIONAL CONTRIBUTION. IF THAT MEETS CENTCOM OBJECTIVES, WE WILL ENCOURAGE THE TASK FORCE TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS. END COMMENT.
SEMBLER

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